

THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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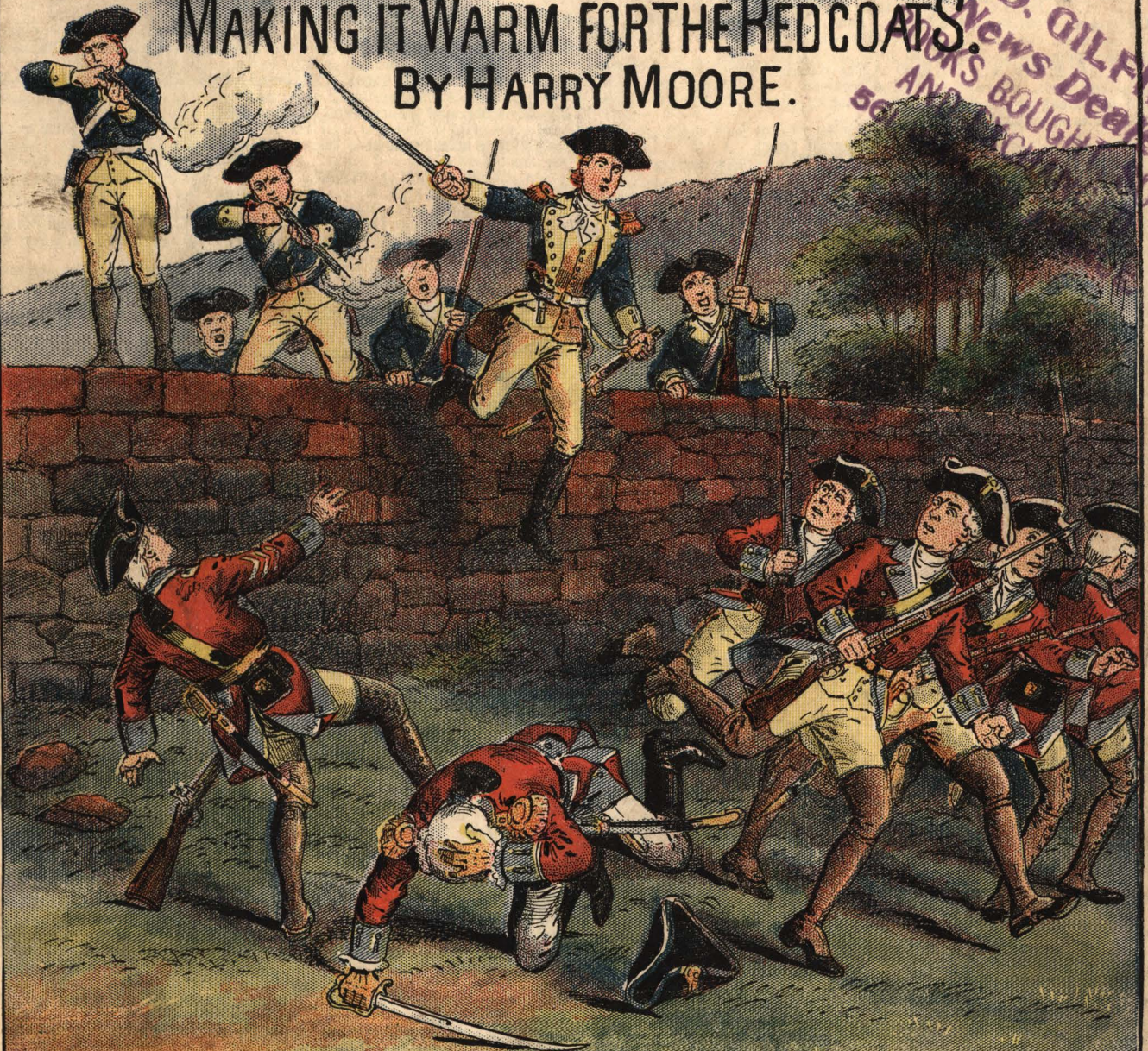
NEW YORK, JUNE 7, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS ON THEIR METTLE; OR

MAKING IT WARM FOR THE REDCOATS.

BY HARRY MOORE.



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NEW YORK, JUNE 7, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

HUNTING FOR TARLETON.

All was bustle and confusion in the patriot encampment on the north bank of the Dan River, just across the State line, in Virginia.

It was the 17th of February, 1781.

The patriot army, under General Greene, had just been chased several hundred miles, clear across North Carolina, by the British army under Cornwallis.

Cornwallis had been unable to get across the Dan River, and had gone off thirty miles to the southward and taken up his quarters at Hillsboro, in North Carolina.

General Greene had sent Dick Slater, the champion patriot spy of the Revolution, down to Hillsboro, and the young man had just returned.

He had reported that Cornwallis had issued a proclamation and that the Tories of North Carolina were rallying to the British standard and joining the British army.

General Greene had at once held a council of war.

"We must put a stop to that business," he told his officers; "Cornwallis has proclaimed that the 'rebels' have been driven out of the State, and that he will soon have a sufficient force to sweep everything before him. We must cross back into North Carolina and prove to the people that we have not given up the State. We must not sit here, idle, and let the British army grow."

The other officers thought the same.

It was decided to move back across the Dan River and cross the State line as soon as possible.

Meantime, and before the entire army would be able to move, General Greene decided to send a party across to attack Colonel Tarleton, who was—so Dick Slater had learned—to come out from Hillsboro, to meet a party of Tories, some four hundred in number, who were to accompany Tarleton back to Hillsboro and join the British army.

General Greene placed this party under the command of Colonels Lee and Pickens—that is, the infantry. The cavalry, which consisted of one hundred young men, were under the command of Captain Dick Slater.

This company of young men was known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

The "Liberty Boys" had done splendid work for the cause.

They had joined Washington's army in the summer of 1776, and had been in active service ever since.

Dick Slater, the captain of the company, and Bob Estabrook, his dearest friend, had both done splendid work as spies and scouts also.

They had been called the "champion spies of the Revolution."

And they had deserved to be so spoken of.

This may well be believed when it is known that General Howe, the commander-in-chief of the British army, kept a standing offer of twenty-five hundred dollars' reward for the capture of the two youths.

Early on the morning of the 18th, the little party crossed the Dan and set out.

General Greene accompanied the party nearly the whole day, giving Lee, Pickens and Dick Slater final instructions.

Then he bade them good-by and turned back.

As Dick's men were mounted, they took the lead and acted as scouting parties, dividing up and going in various directions.

Dick had been instructed to do this by General Greene.

Next morning the party of twenty-five men which Dick commanded (the company of cavalry having divided up into four parties) stopped at a farmhouse, and Dick made some inquiries.

It happened that the farmer in question was a Whig, or a patriot.

He told Dick that Tarleton's band had passed there the evening before, going in a northwesterly direction.

This was just what Dick wished to learn.

He at once sent word back to the colonels, Lee and Pickens, and then pressed onward.

Whenever they stopped at a house where he thought the people were Tories, Dick told them that his men were Tories, and that they were on their way to join Tarleton.

In this way he was enabled to find out which way Tarle-

ton had gone, and he had no difficulty in keeping on the right track.

At about noon Dick's party paused at a farmhouse.

They were hungry.

They decided to get something to eat here, if possible.

The farmer was a Tory, but Dick told him they were loyalists on their way to join Tarleton, and the man said he would furnish them with something to eat.

The "Liberty Boys" ate their dinner; and their horses, too, had plenty to eat.

Just as they were getting ready to mount and continue on their way, a couple of British officers rode up.

"Who are you?" they asked Dick.

"We are loyalists on our way to join Tarleton," replied Dick.

"Good!" one of the officers cried. "Tarleton is only three or four miles away, and Colonel Pyle is coming from the westward with four hundred loyalists. We may as well wait here for them and all go on together."

"We will do so," said Dick. Then he added:

"There is quite a force of loyalists coming in the direction from which we came. It will be here soon."

"Good!" the other British officer exclaimed. "The more the better!"

"Yes," from the other; "General Cornwallis will soon have an army that will be capable of crushing all opposition in the South."

"We'll see about that!" thought Dick. Aloud he said:

"It certainly looks that way. If the recruits keep on coming in the way they have been, he will have a strong army soon."

Half an hour later the force under Lee and Pickens came in sight.

As it drew nearer, the British officers, who were watching the approach of the patriots closely, seemed to grow slightly restless.

They exchanged glances, and seemed puzzled.

Dick was watching them, and did not fail to take note of all this.

Presently one of the officers turned to Dick, and, looking him searchingly in the eyes, said:

"Those men, yonder, march in wonderfully good order for men who have never had any military instruction at all. Are you sure those are loyalists?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Dick, promptly.

He saw the officers were not satisfied, however.

They were uneasy.

The nearer the patriots came the more uneasy the officers grew.

Suddenly one spoke up:

"I guess we won't wait for those men to come. We will go on and tell Tarleton that they are coming."

As he spoke thus, both wheeled their horses and would have ridden away.

But they did not do so.

"Hold!" cried Dick. "If you attempt to go away it will be at the peril of your lives."

The officers looked around in startled dismay.

They saw themselves covered by twenty-five pistols!

Each and every "Liberty Boy" had drawn a pistol at a signal from Dick, and had leveled the weapons at the two British officers.

"W-why, w-what d-does this m-mean?" one of the officers stammered.

"It means that you are our prisoners!" replied Dick.

"Your prisoners!"

"Yes."

"But we are British officers, and you said you were loyal—"

"I know I said so, but all is fair in war, and you must learn not to believe everything you hear one say."

"Then you are not loyalists, after all? You are——"

"Patriots, each and every one of us! Up with your hands!"

The two crestfallen officers lifted their hands and extended them above their heads.

A couple of the "Liberty Boys" rode up alongside the two and disarmed them.

"Now dismount!" ordered Dick.

The officers obeyed.

They could do nothing but obey.

They had been neatly fooled, and were helpless.

Some of the "Liberty Boys" leaped down from their horses and tied the hands of the officers, using halter straps for the purpose.

"Well, Dick, what have you here?" asked Colonel Lee as he and Colonel Pickens rode up at the head of the column.

"A couple of British officers, Colonel," replied Dick. "They have furnished us with some interesting and valuable information."

"What, Dick?"

"They state that Tarleton is only about three or four miles from here."

"That is good news, indeed!"

"They also state that Colonel Pyle, with a force of four hundred Tories, is coming from the westward and that he will soon be here."

"That is better news yet! We must get ready to receive Colonel Pyle and his force of Tories!"

"So we must!" agreed Colonel Pickens.

"I noticed a cross-road a mile or so back," said Lee; "they must be coming on that road."

"Quite likely," said Dick.

Then he and the two colonels drew off to one side, and conferred together in low tones.

"How shall we manage it?" asked Colonel Pickens. "Shall we ambush ourselves in the edge of the timber and open fire as soon as the Tories come along?"

"I'll tell you," said Dick, "perhaps we may be able to make them think we are Tarleton's force. In that case we would not have to hide."

"True," agreed Colonel Lee; "and in that way we may be able to capture the entire force of Tories without firing a shot."

"That is to be desired," said Pickens; "I think it is likely they will take us for Tarleton and his force."

It was decided to risk this, at any rate.

The three hastened back to their men and instructed them regarding the plan which had been decided upon.

Fearing that the British officers might do something to warn the Tories of their danger, the two were taken in charge by a party of four patriot soldiers.

They took the two officers back into the timber a distance of two hundred yards or so, and remained there to guard them.

The patriot lines now began to form for the occasion.

They stretched out up the road a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile.

Presently the party of Tories under Colonel Pyle came in sight.

It was coming up the road in the direction from which the patriots had just come.

"They're coming!"

These were the words that ran down the patriot line. Each and every soldier grasped his musket tightly and waited.

All were eager for the time for action to come.

The patriots did not like the British.

They hated Tories.

The feeling between Whigs and Tories was, naturally, very bitter.

Some of the worst atrocities of the war of the Revolution were committed by Tories.

And frequently said atrocities were committed against people who had been neighbors for years.

On came the Tories.

They little thought they were walking into a trap.

Colonel Pyle could not help seeing the patriots, but he did not pause.

It was evident that he thought it was Tarleton's force.

He thought he had reached the end of his journey, for the present, at least.

He would join Tarleton, and, after a day of rest and a conference with the representative of General Cornwallis, the march would be resumed, all heading toward Hillsboro.

The party of Tories drew nearer and nearer.

At last it came to a stop at a point right in front of where the patriot force was situated.

Colonel Lee rode forward and met Colonel Pyle.

"Ah, Colonel Pyle, I am glad to meet you!" he said, extending his hand.

"The same to you, Colonel Tarleton!" said Pyle, accepting the proffered hand and shaking it heartily. "You see, I have brought the four hundred recruits, as I promised General Cornwallis I would do."

"I see, Colonel. You have done well."

At this instant musket-shots were heard down toward the end of the line of men.

"What does that mean?" asked Colonel Pyle, in sudden suspicion and excitement.

"It means that we are in a trap, colonel!" cried a Tory. "These fellows are patriots!"

CHAPTER II.

THE ROUT OF THE TORIES.

Colonels Lee and Pickens, and Dick Slater, as well, had made one mistake.

They had overlooked the fact that the farmer in front of whose house they were was a Tory.

He had seen Dick and the "Liberty Boys" capture the two British officers.

He had heard everything that was said.

He knew the party was made up of patriots.

He knew that the other party, which came up the road later, was a party of loyalists.

He had made a wide detour, through the timber, and had gone around the extreme end of the patriot line.

His intention was to warn the Tories before they got into the trap, but he was too slow, and they had got there before he could head them off.

He told some of the Tories that the party of men were

patriots, however, with the result that said Tories, in their excitement, at once opened fire on the patriots.

This, as was soon proven, proved to be a bad piece of business for the Tories.

They were green hands as yet.

Their opponents were old campaigners, veterans.

The Tories' fire was returned instantly.

The patriots wasted but few loads.

Their bullets went straight to the mark.

The engagement lasted but a short time—not to exceed five or six minutes.

Considerable execution was done in that brief time, however.

Ninety of the Tories were killed and wounded.

The rest tried to escape—quite a good many succeeded—but a goodly number were captured.

Colonel Pyle succeeded in getting away.

It was, as it happened, only about two miles to where Colonel Tarleton had his camp.

He heard the firing, and took the alarm at once.

He gave rapid orders, and his men prepared for battle.

Presently Colonel Pyle entered the encampment.

When he told Tarleton the story of the disaster which had overtaken him, Tarleton could hardly believe the evidence of his own hearing.

"This is a terrible affair!" he said. "It is all the more terrible on account of the fact that we supposed the entire patriot force was thirty miles away on the other side of the River Dan."

"True," agreed Colonel Pyle.

"I am very sorry this occurred," said Tarleton; "I fear it will have a tendency to discourage the loyal citizens of this vicinity and keep them from coming forward and joining the army."

"I fear so."

Tarleton decided to remain where he was only as long as he had to do so.

He would break camp as soon as possible.

This would take several hours, and during that time he would have to be on his guard and ready to show fight should the patriots put in an appearance.

The patriot did not appear, however, and soon after nightfall Tarleton's force moved away in the direction of Hillsboro.

Dick had urged Colonels Lee and Pickens to attack Tarleton that afternoon, but they thought it would be safer to wait till morning.

"We are looking for some recruits, Dick," said Lee, "and

if they reach us to-night we will have a good force with which to make the attack in the morning."

Dick did not say a great deal.

Next morning, when the force moved forward, the point where Tarleton had been was soon reached, but his force was not there.

Tarleton was far away, marching as rapidly as possible toward Hillsboro.

Colonels Lee and Pickens were chagrined at missing the chance to strike Tarleton a blow, but they had accomplished considerable in capturing and dispersing the four hundred Tories, so were, on the whole, very well satisfied with their work.

They at once set out on the return to the main army.

They did not return at once, however.

They found that they could do some good work in heading off bands of Tories who were en route to Hillsboro to join the British army, and in chasing foraging parties of the British.

They put in two or three days at this, and then on the 24th they rejoined the main army, which had now crossed the Dan River, and advanced southward to the headwaters of the Haw River.

The army had gone into camp here to await the coming of reinforcements, and the return of Lee and Pickens and the "Liberty Boys."

There was great rejoicing in the patriot encampment when the party reached there with the Tory prisoners.

General Greene was well pleased.

He congratulated Lee, Pickens and Dick.

"You have done well," he said. "I do not think the Tories will be so eager to join the British army as they were before."

This was the case.

When Tarleton reached Hillsboro with the story of the fate that had overtaken the party of Tories under Colonel Pyle, Cornwallis was almost paralyzed.

He scarcely knew what to think.

"What does it mean?" he asked. "Do you suppose the rebels have been strongly reinforced?"

"Hard telling," was Tarleton's reply; "one would think so, however. Otherwise they would hardly have dared venture back across the Dan River."

"That is what I think. Well, we must make them fight as soon as possible. Otherwise our plans of recruiting our army from among the loyalists of this region will be knocked in the head."

"You are right."

"I will send out some spies to learn the numbers of the

rebels, and where they are; and, if possible, what they intend trying to do."

"That will be a good plan."

Cornwallis soon saw that the presence of the patriot army in North Carolina was exercising a strong restraining effect on the loyalists.

They stopped coming in and joining the British army.

He got very few recruits.

On the other hand, General Greene, in his camp up on the headwaters of the Haw, was receiving constant accessions to his force.

He was in very good spirits.

If this continued very much longer he would have a sufficient force so that he could offer Cornwallis a battle.

He sent out small parties under Lee, Pickens, Williams and Sumpter, with instructions to watch for foraging parties of redcoats and chase them whenever any were encountered.

One afternoon he sent for Dick.

The young man reported at once.

"Dick," said Greene, "do you suppose you could find General Marion?"

"I can try, General Greene," said Dick, quietly.

"Very good; that means you will succeed!"

"I certainly shall do so, if possible, sir," replied Dick.

"I know that. Well, Dick, I wish to send a message to Marion. I shall write it and you must take it to him, if possible."

"I will try, sir."

"Very well; return in half an hour."

"Shall I make arrangements to start at once?"

"At once, Dick."

"Very well."

Dick saluted and withdrew.

He returned to his quarters, and bridled and saddled his horse.

Half an hour later he returned to the tent occupied by General Greene.

The message was ready.

The general handed Dick a folded and sealed document.

"Deliver that to General Marion, Dick," General Greene said; "but if you should be in imminent danger of being captured, throw it away rather than let it fall into the hands of the British. In case you should be forced to do that, go ahead, if you should escape, after all, and hunt Marion up and tell him to report to me here at the earliest possible moment."

"I will do so, sir," replied Dick.

He placed the document in his pocket.

Then, when he had received his final instructions, he bade General Greene good-by and left the tent.

He returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," bade them good-bye, and, mounting his horse, rode away.

Dick knew that he was going on a dangerous journey.

The country through which he would have to go was overrun by bands of foraging redcoats.

Then, too, the majority of the people in this part of the country were Tories.

He would be in danger in many ways.

But Dick did not hesitate.

He had been through too many dangers during the past five years to be deterred by danger now.

For one thing, he was well mounted.

His horse was a magnificent animal.

His name was "Major."

Dick had captured the horse from the redcoats nearly five years before, and had had him ever since.

Major was very fleet of foot, and had remarkable staying qualities.

So Dick felt that he did not have a great deal to fear in a race with the redcoats.

He would have to be on the lookout for ambushes and surprises.

Dick headed toward the south.

He rode in this direction perhaps ten miles.

Then he turned and headed eastward.

He continued in this direction till he struck the Haw River timber.

He thought that General Marion, the "Swamp Fox," might be somewhere along the river.

He struck off southward.

The road was scarcely worthy the name.

It was more in the nature of a pathway through the timber.

But Dick did not mind this.

He had been used to timber all his life.

Therefore he always felt at home when within the timber.

As evening drew near, Dick began to look out for a place to stay through the night.

He had passed several cabins during the afternoon.

He felt sure he would come to another before long.

Nor was he mistaken.

Presently he came to a log cabin.

A yellow cur came racing toward him, barking at a terrible rate.

The barking of the dog evidently attracted the attention

of its owner, for as Dick came to a stop in front of the door it opened and a man appeared in the doorway.

He was not a prepossessing-looking man.

Quite the contrary.

He was roughly dressed, had shaggy, unkempt hair and beard, and his eyes were keen and ferrety, but shifted about as if their owner was continually on the watch to avoid being taken by surprise.

Dick did not like the fellow's looks, but decided that rather than risk having to spend the night out of doors, he would take chances on spending the night in the company of the man, unprepossessing though he was in appearance.

"You can't always judge a man by his looks," thought Dick; "he is rough, of course, but may be honest enough."

"Good evening," said Dick.

"Ev'nin'," was the reply, in a gruff voice.

"What would be the chance for me to stay over night with you?"

"Whar yo' frum?" he asked.

"From up north a ways."

Dick did not think it any particular business of the man's where he was from, so he answered only in a very general way.

The man grunted.

"Whar yo' goin'?" he asked.

"Down south a ways."

The man grunted again.

"Whut's yo' name?"

"He wants to know it all," thought Dick. Then aloud he said:

"My name is Paxton."

"King's man er reb?"

Of course, Dick, not knowing which side his prospective host was on, did not care to commit himself.

So he said:

"Neither. I'm neutral."

"Whut's thet?"

"That means that I don't care which side wins," explained Dick.

"Oh, thet's it?"

"Yes."

"Waal—yo' kin stay."

"Good!" said Dick.

Then he leaped down off his horse.

Had he known what lay before him as a result of remaining over night at the cabin, he might—indeed, he would—have gone on and taken the chances of having to stay out all night.

CHAPTER III.

DICK A PRISONER.

There was no stable.

Dick had to tie Major out.

It happened that the man had a little corn, however, so the horse would not have to go hungry.

When they had tied the horse and given him some corn, the man and Dick made their way to the cabin.

"Come in," the man said.

Dick followed him into the cabin.

It was a rough log cabin, consisting of but a single room.

At one end was a huge fireplace.

In this a fire was burning.

The flames furnished the only light.

It made the interior of the cabin light enough for all practical purposes.

The host indicated a splitlog stool.

"Set down," he said.

He was a man of few words.

Dick sat down.

"S'pose yo' hain't hed no supper?"

Dick shook his head.

"No."

"S'pose yo' hungry, hain't yo'?"

"Slightly."

"All right; I'll git yo' sumpin' ter eat."

The man went to work.

He cooked some meat which was venison, Dick thought.

Then he placed this, with some cornbread, on a rough slab table, and invited Dick to "Set up an' eat."

Dick did so.

He was hungry, and rough as the food was, he ate it with a relish.

The man had made a substitute for coffee by boiling browned cornmeal.

Dick drank some of this and thought it not so bad.

"What is your name?" asked Dick, presently.

"Name's Bill."

"Bill what?"

"Skaggs."

"Lived here long?"

"'Bout fifteen year."

"That's a good while."

"Yas."

Dick had got through eating now.

He again took a seat at the fire.

Skaggs busied himself clearing up the table.

When he had finished, he took a seat in front of the fire. He lighted a pipe and smoked silently.

Mr. Skaggs was not much of a conversationalist.

This is usually the case with men who are much alone.

Having no one to talk to, they gradually get out of the way of talking.

Dick, while seemingly seeing nothing but the flames in the fireplace, kept a quiet watch of his companion out of the corners of his eyes.

He presently noted the fact that Skaggs was eyeing him furtively.

"He doesn't know what to think of me," thought Dick.

Dick wished that he knew on which side his host was.

He guessed, however, that he was on the side of the king:

"He looks like a Tory," thought Dick. "To my mind he might sit for a picture of Toryism personified."

Not knowing what to talk about, Dick did not do much in the way of talking.

He thought it best to maintain silence rather than risk saying something which might not suit his host.

Skaggs smoked steadily for an hour.

He said not a word during that time.

Dick maintained silence also.

Then Skaggs laid his pipe up, and, looking at Dick, asked:

"Want ter git ter sleep, I s'pose?"

"I guess I might as well lie down," replied Dick.

At the side of the room were a couple of bunks.

The bunks were filled with leaves, grass and small boughs.

On top of these, skins of wild animals were laid.

Skaggs indicated one of the bunks.

"Yo' kin sleep thar," he said.

"Thank you," said Dick.

Then he went over to the side of the room and lay down in the bunk.

It was a rude bed, but was quite comfortable.

Dick, during the five years of soldiering, had become accustomed to hardships.

He had slept out in the open air, in cold, wet and disagreeable weather, hundreds of times, and this rough bunk in the warm cabin was almost a luxury.

It had an extremely soothing effect, and almost before he knew it he was asleep.

How long he slept he had no means of knowing, but he was suddenly awakened.

In a rude manner, too.

He awoke to find that his host was binding his arms!

The fellow had managed to get a piece of deerskin thong wrapped around Dick's wrists in such a manner that the youth was, when he awoke, quite helpless.

Dick struggled, but soon found it did no good.

He was soon rendered altogether helpless.

As soon as he realized that he could do nothing, Dick ceased struggling.

He looked up into the face of Skaggs and asked:

"What does this mean?"

Skaggs laughed.

In a disagreeable manner, too.

"Hain't et plain enuff?" he asked, with a leer.

"It's plain enough that I am a prisoner, but I don't understand why. What does it mean, anyway?"

"Whut does et mean?"

"Yes."

"Yo' knows well enuff whut et means."

"I most certainly do not."

The fellow laughed again.

"Waal, I do," he declared.

"Don't you think I am entitled to an explanation?"

"I dunno's I think so."

"Well, explain, anyway. Tell me why you have made me a prisoner."

Skaggs looked down upon Dick for a few moments in silence.

Then he said:

"Waal, I guess I kin tell yo'. Et's easy enuff. I hev made up my min' thet yo' air er rebel spy, an' so I hev made yo' er pris'ner."

"What made you think I was a rebel spy?"

"Oh, yer ackshuns."

"My actions?"

"Yas."

"In what way did I act that it made you think I was a rebey spy?"

"Oh, in lots uv ways."

"Name some of them."

"Waal, yo' wouldn't tell whar yo' wuz frum."

"I told you I was from up north a ways."

"Thet thar hain't no answer, nohow yo' kin fix et."

"I think so."

"Waal, I don't; an' yo' said yo' wuz goin' down south a ways."

"Well?"

"Thet hain't tellin' nothin', neether."

"I think so."

"I don't; an' then yo' wouldn't tell which side yo' wuz on—whether yo' wuz fur ther king or ag'in 'im."

"I told you I was on neither side; that I was neutral."

"I know yo' tole me thet."

"Well, I have a right to be neutral if I wish to be, don't I?"

"I guess ez how yo' hev er right ter be nootral ef yo' wanter."

"Then why have you made me a prisoner?"

"'Cause I don't b'leeve yo' is nootral."

"You don't believe it?"

"No."

"Why don't you?"

"Oh, yo' don't look et."

"I don't look it?"

"No."

"In what way don't I look nootral?"

"Yo' looks ez if yo' wuz er reb."

"I looks as if I was a rebel, you think?"

"Yas."

"I don't see how you make that out?"

"Waal, et's easy enuff. Yo' looks like yo' wuz er reb, an' er soldier. Yo' don't look like jes' er common kin' uv er feller."

This was something of a compliment, but Dick was not in a position to appreciate it.

"Well, I am just a common sort of a fellow," he said.

"You have made a mistake."

The fellow shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said, in a positive tone of voice.

Dick was silent a few moments, and then asked:

"What are you going to do with me?"

"I guess ez how I'll take yo' ter Hillsboro ter-morrer."

"To Hillsboro?"

"Yas."

"What for?"

"Ter turn yo' over ter Ginerall Cornwallis."

"General Cornwallis?"

"Yas."

"Who is he?"

"Yo' know who he is."

"I think I've heard his name," said Dick, pretending to look puzzled. "He's one of the British generals, isn't he?"

"Yo' know he is."

"I guessed it; but you are altogether wrong regarding me, Mr. Skaggs. I am neutral, and you ought not to hold me a prisoner."

"Yo' think not?" with a grin.

"I know it. You are making a mistake."

"Mebby so."

"There is no maybe about it. You are making a mis-

take, and I hope you will reconsider this matter and decide to let me go free."

Skaggs shook his head.

"I kain't do thet," he said.

"Yes, you can."

"No; besides, I don't think I hev made enny mistake erbout this heer thing."

"You certainly have," insisted Dick.

Skaggs shook his head once more, and then, stepping forward, began feeling in Dick's pockets.

Suddenly Dick remembered that he had in his pocket a message from General Greene to General Marion.

Skaggs would certainly find it.

Dick's heart almost stood still.

He realized that he was in great danger.

The possession of the message would prove him to be a patriot spy and scout.

Dick hoped that Skaggs might overlook the document.

It was in an inside coat-pocket.

Skaggs made a thorough search, however.

He seemed certain that Dick was a patriot.

And he seemed to be sure he would find something in the way of papers to prove that such was the case.

He presently found the document.

He drew it forth, with an exclamation of triumph.

"I've got it!" he said. "Heer is' what will prove yo' ter be er reb!"

Dick was quick to think.

He had sized the man up pretty closely.

He did not believe the fellow could read.

He did not look as if he could.

In that case it might be possible to deceive him even yet.

Dick decided upon his course of action.

It was to pretend that the paper the fellow had secured was of no importance.

In pursuance of this plan he simply laughed carelessly in response to the man's statement, and said:

"That paper amounts to nothing. It is of no importance."

"Uv course yo'd say so," Skaggs said.

"It is the truth," said Dick. "Read it and you will see that I have spoken truly."

"I kain't read."

Dick's heart leaped.

"I thought not!" he said to himself.

"What good has it done you to find the paper, then?" he asked.

"I'm goin' ter keep ther paper an' giv' et ter Ginerall Cornwallis, when I take yo' thar in ther mornin'."

"How near morning is it?" asked Dick.

"Oh, it hain't ennyways near mornin' yit. Et's erbout midnight, I guess."

"Good!" thought Dick. "That gives me some time in which to work. I must get free from these bonds and make my escape from this fellow before morning!"

But how to do it?

That was the question.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRUGGLE.

Skaggs looked at the document which he had taken from Dick in a longing manner.

He was evidently wishing he could read so that he might learn the contents of the paper in question.

"That is nothing of any importance whatever," said Dick, who read what was passing in the fellow's mind. "Even if you could read it, it would do you no good. I wish you could read it, then you would know I have been telling you the truth.

Skaggs grunted.

It was plain he did not believe Dick.

He placed the paper in his pocket.

"Gineral Cornwallis will be glad ter git this, I think," he said, grimly.

"You are mistaken," said Dick; "don't think that, for if you do you will be disappointed."

"I'll resk et."

Skaggs walked over to the other side of the room and threw himself into a bunk.

"I'll jes' take er snooze," he remarked, sleepily.

"I hope it will be a good, sound one," thought Dick.

It so proved.

Skaggs evidently felt perfectly at ease, for he went to sleep almost instantly.

He was soon snoring.

This was sweetest music to Dick's ears.

"Good!" thought Dick. "He is sound asleep. Now to work. I must get my arms free—and once I succeed in doing that, Mr. Skaggs will have to look out!"

Dick was terribly in earnest.

He did not feel very good over the way he had been treated by his host.

He was eager for a chance to even up the score.

Whatever happened he must not allow himself to be taken a prisoner to General Cornwallis.

Nothing in the world would give the British general greater pleasure than to get Dick Slater, the "rebel" spy, into his power.

Dick at once began working at the thong which bound his wrists together.

He made scant headway.

Skaggs had done the work well.

He evidently intended, when he tied the knots, to see to it that his prisoner did not get free.

It was no wonder, Dick thought, that he had thrown himself down and gone to sleep.

It seemed as if he was perfectly safe in doing so.

Dick did not despair, however.

He was a youth who never despaired.

He had learned, long ago, that there was always hope while there was life.

He had been in too many tight places, and escaped, to give up, no matter how impossible it seemed that he might escape.

Dick was phenomenally strong.

He exerted all his strength on the thong.

At first he could not notice any give to the thong.

He kept on, however, and presently he became convinced that the thong was giving somewhat.

This encouraged him.

"I may succeed yet," Dick thought; "I hope so, and if I do I'll make Mr. Skaggs wish he had not tried this little trick."

Dick worked away, steadily and persistently.

He kept stretching the thong, little by little.

"It may take all the rest of the night, but I think I shall succeed," Dick said to himself.

While he was working away, Skaggs suddenly gave vent to a snort and awoke with a start.

Dick was not taken by surprise.

While working, he kept his eyes on Skaggs.

This was for the purpose of guarding against surprise.

So now, when the man opened his eyes and looked across toward Dick, the youth ceased work and pretended to be asleep.

Skaggs eyed Dick for a few moments, and then closed his eyes.

He was soon asleep again.

This was proven by his snore, which almost rattled the clapboards on the roof at times.

Dick waited until he was sure the man was sound asleep.

Then he went to work once more.

He worked away, persistently and patiently.

This was a case where haste would not accomplish anything.

Dick worked for at least two hours, taken altogether, and at last succeeded in getting the thong stretched to such an extent that he managed to pull first one hand then the other out of bondage, so to speak.

He was free!

Free so far as being tied was concerned.

He was not yet safe, however.

He was in the cabin alone with the rough Tory woodsman Skaggs.

Dick thought it possible he might be able to steal out of the cabin and get safely away while yet the man slept; but he would not go away and leave the message to Marion in the fellow's hands.

Skaggs would undoubtedly take the document to Cornwallis.

And this must not be allowed.

Dick carefully got out of the bunk.

He stretched himself.

He rubbed his wrists to get the blood circulating once more.

He kept his eyes on Skaggs meantime

He feared the fellow might awaken at any moment.

He wished to be in shape to engage in a hand-to-hand combat with the man should he do so.

Presently Dick decided that his arms and wrists were as good as new.

He had as good use of them as ever.

As soon as he had satisfied himself of this fact Dick got ready to act.

He stole softly across the floor.

He was about half way across the room when the man in the bunk opened his eyes.

He was evidently a light sleeper, and Dick's footfall had awakened him.

His eyes fell upon Dick instantly.

He stared a few moments.

He blinked and looked puzzled.

Then, with an oath, he leaped out of the bunk.

He had suddenly realized that the prisoner had in some manner succeeded in freeing himself.

A hoarse cry escaped Skaggs.

He leaped toward Dick with the ferocity of a maddened tiger.

Dick met him half way.

The next instant they came together with a crash.

"I've got yo' now, yo' pesky reb!" the fellow growled.

Skaggs was a large, strong-limbed fellow.

Doubtless he had not the least thought other than that he would be able to easily overcome the youth.

There was plenty of confidence in the tone of his voice.

Dick made no reply.

He decided that it would be as well for him to save his breath.

He might need it all before he got through with this fellow.

Dick found Skaggs to be a very strong fellow.

His arms were like bars of iron.

And if Dick found Skaggs strong, the latter was surprised to find the youth was, seemingly, as strong as himself.

In addition, Dick was younger and consequently more athletic and lithe.

As soon as Skaggs discovered that he was not to have everything his own way, he became wild with anger.

"Cuss yo'! I'll break yo' in two!" he grated.

"I don't know whether you will or not," replied Dick, quietly.

"Yas, I will!"

"I don't think you will!"

"I tied yo' up before; I'll do et ag'in!"

"You took me when I was asleep, like the coward that you are. I'm not asleep now."

"Yo' will be purty soon. I'll bump yo' head so hard yo'll go ter sleep."

"We'll see about that!"

Then the two struggled more fiercely than ever.

At present Dick was working on the defensive.

Skaggs was attacking him so fiercely that it made this necessary.

The youth was quite satisfied to have it so, however.

His opponent would the sooner tire himself out.

Then Dick could take his inning.

Skaggs was a tough fellow, however.

He was a man who had lived all his life in the open air, and was healthy and strong.

His lungs were perfect.

His wind was almost as good as was Dick's.

He was very slow to tire.

Dick began to realize, presently, that it was to be a terrible struggle.

But he was determined to win.

He would not let this fellow triumph over him.

He could not do it—must not do it.

Dick gritted his teeth and settled down to his work with the determination to succeed.

Skaggs kept growling.

And as he failed to throw the youth to the floor, as he was trying to do, he became more infuriated than ever.

He uttered oaths which were terrible to listen to.

"Yo' cussid reb!" he would cry out. "I'll fix yo' yit!" and then he would attack Dick even more fiercely.

Here and there they moved, first on one side of the room then on the other.

It was a terrible contest.

"I'll kill yo' when I do git yo' down ag'in!" Skaggs grated.

"But you won't get me down again!" said Dick, grimly.

This, of course, made the man more furious than ever, and he tried to force matters.

He could accomplish nothing by so doing.

He was engaged in a contest with a remarkable youth.

There were few men who could hold their own with Dick in an athletic contest of any kind; or, indeed, in a contest where strength was a factor.

And in this contest both were factors.

Dick was beginning to feel somewhat tired now.

His opponent was more tired, however, if indications went for anything.

He was beginning to puff and pant.

Dick took note of this.

"I will be able to down him pretty soon, now," the youth thought.

He began to work somewhat on the offensive now.

Skaggs seemed to realize that the youth was a match for him.

He stopped talking and cursing, and saved his breath.

This was the wisest thing he could possible have done.

Here and there about the room the two moved.

Their breath came in gasps.

Both were becoming very tired.

But Skaggs was the more tired of the two.

Dick began to feel confident that, barring accidents, he would be able to get the better of his opponent.

It would still take a lot of hard work before his tough opponent would be vanquished.

And there was the chance of an accident occurring.

This might turn the tide and cause Dick to be the defeated party.

He was careful and watched closely.

Skaggs fought on with desperate energy.

He seemed to realize at last that unless he did something desperate he would be vanquished.

He immediately called all his energies into requisition and went at Dick fiercely.

For a few moments the youth was again compelled to keep on the defensive.

Only for a few moments, however.

It was the last effort of the tough woodman.

Suddenly his wind and strength seemed to give out.

Dick realized the fact at once.

He took advantage of it.

He exerted all his strength.

He got a peculiar hold which he had always found effective.

The next instant, down went Skaggs to the floor, with a crash.

Dick was on top of him.

The youth did not believe in delaying, now that he had the upper hand.

He whirled the man over onto his face.

He caught Skaggs by the wrists and pulled them together behind the fellow's back.

Then Dick proceeded to tie the wrists with the very same thong with which his own wrists had been bound.

He succeeded in doing this almost before Skaggs realized what had occurred.

Then Dick rose to his feet and turned the fellow over onto his back once more.

"There, friend Skaggs," said Dick, quietly, "it looks a bit as if it is my turn to crow, doesn't it?"

A hoarse growl was the only reply.

CHAPTER V.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

Dick merely laughed.

The growls of the worthy Skaggs could not worry him now.

He reached his hand into the man's pocket and withdrew the message which the fellow had taken from him.

"This is of no importance, friend Skaggs," said Dick, quietly, "but as it belongs to me, I will take possession of it."

"Yo' cussid reb!" Skaggs almost hissed. "I'll kill yo', ef I ever git ther chance!"

"No doubt you are capable of it," was the calm reply; "I do not intend letting you have the chance, however."

"Yo'd better not!"

Suddenly Dick assumed a listening attitude.

He thought he had heard the sound of hoofbeats.

He listened intently for a few moments.
Sure enough! He now heard the sound of hoofbeats quite plainly.

A party of horsemen was coming!
Were the horsemen friends or foes?
That was the question.

It was a difficult question to answer.
It was also a serious question for Dick.
He looked at Skaggs.

That worthy had heard the hoofbeats.
This was evident from his expression.
There was a look of fiendish delight on his face.
"I'll soon git the chance at yo', yo' cussid reb!" he grated.
"You think they are your friends, then?" asked Dick.
"I'm shore uv et."

"I'm not so sure. I am rather of the opinion that they are friends of mine."
"Yo'll see."

"Yes, I suppose I will. And that is all you will do—see. I'm not going to give you a chance to yell."

With the words, Dick drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and before Skaggs knew what the youth was about, the handkerchief had been forced into the fellow's mouth.

Skaggs tried to eject the handkerchief, but could not do so, and Dick quickly tied another handkerchief over the man's mouth in such fashion that it would hold the first one in.

Skaggs grew red, then almost black in the face.
He swelled up like a toad.

He seemed in imminent danger of bursting.
He had intended to yell out and call to the newcomers.
Now this plan had been knocked in the head.
He glared at Dick with eyes of hate.
Dick paid no attention to Skaggs, however.
He had other work on hand.

Who and what were the horsemen approaching the cabin?
He must find out.

They might be friends, in which case all would be well.
Then again, they might be enemies, in which case he would be in great danger.

Dick examined the door.

He was pleased to note that it was a strong one.
It was strongly barred, too.

There were two bars across it.

It would be a difficult job for any one on the outside to force an entrance.

Dick looked around the room.

There were no windows.

If the horsemen were enemies and wished to effect an entrance, they would have to do it by way of the door.

This would consume considerable time.

And during that time, Dick could be figuring out some way to escape.

He listened at the door.

The horsemen, whoever they were, were very near, now.

Soon the trampling of the horses' feet was heard right in front of the cabin.

Then the trampling suddenly ceased.

The horsemen had stopped.

Dick listened intently.

He could hear voices.

"Knock on the door, Jenkins, and wake Skaggs up," Dick heard some one say, in an authoritative tone of voice.

"It must be a band of redecoats," thought Dick. "I am sure they are not patriots."

There was the sound of approaching footsteps.

They ceased just outside the door.

Then there came a loud rapping on the door.

Dick, of course, made no reply.

He waited in silence.

Presently the man on the outside rapped again, louder this time.

"Try the door!" Dick heard the authoritative voice say, after another wait of a few moments.

The door rattled the next instant.

"It's barred on the inside!" the man outside cried.

"Then Skaggs must be inside," said the man with the authoritative voice. "Keep on pounding on the door till you wake him up."

Thump! thump! thump!

The man pounded lustily.

Dick by this time was confident the men outside were redecoats.

Now, this being the case, what was it best that he should do?

This was a hard question to answer.

One thing seemed plain, however.

He must remain in the cabin.

The only means of exit was by way of the door.

And he could not get out that way now.

The pounding ceased for a few moments, presently.

The man who was doing the pounding had evidently ceased in order to give Skaggs a chance to let the fact be known that he was awake.

But Skaggs, although awake, was not in a position to let the fact be known.

The silence within the cabin remained unbroken.

"What, in the name of all that is wonderful, can be the matter with Skaggs?" Dick heard, in the authoritative voice. "He is certainly very sound asleep!"

"Maybe he is dead!" some one suggested.

"Dead drunk, more likely!" in the authoritative voice. Thump! thump! thump!

Again the fellow at the door pounded in a fierce manner. He seemed determined to awaken Skaggs.

Then he ceased and waited for some sound from within. Of course, none came.

After a brief silence the authoritative voice was heard again:

"Break the door down!"

The sound of numerous footsteps was heard.

A number of men were coming to assist in breaking the door down.

Dick began to think he was in a tight place.

If the men should succeed in breaking the door down it would be impossible for him to escape capture.

He realized this very forcibly.

He looked at the two stout bars across the door, however, and felt better.

Surely they could not break the door down!

Dick heard the men at the door.

There was considerable shuffling of feet, and the confused murmuring of voices.

The men were getting ready to push against the door. Presently Dick heard a muffled, "Now!"

"That means for all to push," thought Dick.

He watched the door, eagerly.

He saw it spring slightly.

But that was all.

It gave no sign of giving way.

The door itself was strong.

The bars made it trebly strong.

Dick did not believe that enough men could get in a position to push against the door to budge it.

Presently there was the confused murmuring of voices again.

Then one of the men called out:

"It's no use, Captain Morton!"

"What's that?" came back the reply. "Do you mean to say you can't break the door down?"

"That is exactly what we do mean to say," was the reply; "the door is as solid as the rock of Gibraltar!"

"And you think you can't succeed in breaking it down?"

"I am sure of it, captain!"

"But it must be broken down! I wish to see Skaggs, and I am not going away from here until I do see him!"

"Well, I don't see how it is to be done."

"Go get a log of a goodly size! You can use it as a battering-ram."

Dick gave a start.

If this was done the redcoats would succeed in breaking the door down.

Dick realized this.

And if they succeeded in forcing an entrance and found Dick there, he would certainly be taken prisoner.

Dick did not like the outlook at all.

He would not allow himself to be captured now, after having succeeded in getting the better of Skaggs, for anything in the world.

But how was he to help himself?

Dick looked around the room.

He looked up at the roof.

It was made of clapboards, nailed on poles.

Dick wondered if he might be able to loosen some of the clapboards and climb out and leap down and escape.

It seemed to be his only chance.

So he decided to try it.

At one side was a sort of loft.

Skaggs used it as a place to store skins of wild animals and other articles which he wished to have out of the way.

Dick hastened to climb up to this platform.

The skins which were piled there being in his way, the youth pushed them off onto the floor.

As they were soft they made no noise when they struck.

Dick felt of some of the clapboards.

He found several that were loose.

He believed he would be able to make a hole large enough to crawl through.

It would not do to try to remove the clapboards at once, however.

The redcoats would hear him.

He made up his mind to wait until the men returned and begun using the battering-ram.

The noise they would make would cover the noise he would make.

He waited as patiently as was possible under the circumstances.

Dick wondered if the redcoats, in searching for a log to use as a battering-ram, would discover his horse.

Should they do so they would at once suspect that some one other than Skaggs was in the cabin.

They would probably suspect the facts in the case—that Skaggs was a prisoner in his own cabin.

Dick listened intently.

He was confident that if the redcoats discovered his horse they would make an outcry of some kind.

He heard no outcry, however.

He heard the sound of shuffling feet, presently.

Then, a few moments later, he heard a terrible thump against the door.

Dick had been listening for this, and immediately on the heels of the noise he gave a fierce wrench at one of the clapboards and pulled it loose.

"Good!" thought Dick. "If I succeed in getting a board loose every time they strike the door with that log I shall be able to get out of here, all right, before they can get in."

He listened intently.

He heard the shuffling of feet.

The men were rushing forward to strike with the battering-ram against the door.

Crash!

The battering-ram had struck.

At the same instant Dick wrenched another clapboard loose.

This made a fair-sized opening.

"Two more will be sufficient," thought Dick.

He looked out through the opening and noted, with satisfaction, that it was still quite dark.

It was the darkness which preceded dawn.

Again the rush of feet.

Again the crash!

And again Dick took advantage of the opportunity and pulled another clapboard loose.

The door had given way considerable the last time, and Dick thought it would not stand the strain of more than one or two more of the assaults with the battering-ram.

The men with the battering-ram again rushed forward, as Dick could tell by the sound of their shuffling feet, and again there came the crash, as the log struck the door.

One of the bars fell to the floor with a clatter.

Dick wrenched another clapboard loose.

"The door will go down the next time," thought Dick; "I must get out of here!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE "SWAMP FOX" APPEARS.

The hole which Dick had made was now, he was sure, large enough so that he would be able to get out through it.

He decided to get out at once.

He would not wait for the door to be broken down.

The instant the door gave way the redcoats would swarm into the cabin.

They would find Skaggs, who would tell them all about Dick.

There would then be a great hue and cry.

Dick would be chased fiercely.

He would have great difficulty in escaping.

So Dick began working his way, with as great rapidity as possible, through the opening.

He was soon through.

He began letting himself down over the edge of the roof of the cabin.

The cabin was not high.

Dick could have leaped to the ground without being in danger of hurting himself.

But he feared he might make noise sufficient to attract the attention of some of the redcoats.

So he let himself down slowly and carefully, till he hung by his hands which grasped the topmost log.

Just at this instant there came the sound of a great crash.

The redcoats had jammed the battering-ram against the door again—this time with effect, if sounds were any indication.

The crash was followed by a thud and then by a wild howl, which was, however, smothered like.

Dick knew what had happened.

The door had been broken down, and, in falling, had fallen on the worthy Mr. Skaggs!

The youth was rather glad of it.

"Served him right!" thought Dick.

Then he dropped.

His feet were not more than four feet from the ground when the youth let go, so he was scarcely jarred when he struck the earth.

As he alighted he saw several dark forms come running around the corner of the cabin.

"There they come!" thought Dick.

He bounded away toward the edge of the timber.

It was only a few yards distant.

But before the youth could reach the timber the redcoats were upon him.

Dick was desperate now.

He struck out at the fellows with such strength, rapidity and fierceness as to surprise them.

They were not looking for such spirited resistance from one man.

One after another the youth's assailants went down.

He soon had three or four of the redcoats piled up, and

with a couple of quick, fierce blows he downed the remaining two.

Then just as some more redcoats came around the corner of the cabin, Dick darted into the edge of the timber.

It was beginning to grow light enough so that one could see fairly well now.

Day was breaking.

The redcoats caught sight of Dick.

They uttered shouts and darted after him.

Dick ran toward the spot where he had tied his horse the evening before.

The horse was there.

Dick was glad of this.

He uttered an exclamation of delight under his breath, and leaped forward and seized the halter-strap.

He started to untie the strap when the crack! crack! of firearms came to his hearing.

The firing was close at hand.

At the cabin, in fact.

Surely the redcoats were not firing at him, Dick thought.

And if not at him, then at whom?

There came wild yells following the shots.

"There is a fight on between the redcoats and another party of men!" thought Dick.

The members of the other party were sure to be friends of Dick.

He realized this, and did not untie the halter-strap.

He saw that the redcoats who had come around the corner of the cabin had not followed him into the timber.

They had returned to help their companions fight the newcomers.

The firing and yelling was still going on.

Dick wished to have a hand in what was going on.

He turned and hastened back out of the timber.

He ran to the cabin, and around it.

He was just in time to see the party of redcoats riding away up the road at a gallop, with another party of men following and firing as they went.

"By Jove! I believe those are the 'Swamp Fox' and his men!" thought Dick.

In that case it would not do to let them get away from him.

He wished to place the message in General Marion's hands at the earliest possible moment.

Dick decided to get his horse and follow with all speed.

He turned to hasten back to the timber to where his horse was hitched.

As he turned he came face to face with Skaggs!

With a fierce, snarling cry the man leaped toward Dick.

"I've got yo' now!" the man cried. "I've got yo' now, an' I'm goin' ter kill yo', thet's whut I'm goin' ter do!"

He had overcome him once that night in a hand-to-hand combat, and he felt that he could do it again.

"Didn't you get enough the other time?" asked Dick, as they met with a crash.

"No, cuss yo'!"

The man went to work with desperate energy this time.

He was anxious to get even with Dick for having overcome him in their first combat.

Skaggs thought that it must have been an accident that other time.

This young fellow certainly could not do the same thing a second time.

Locked in each other's arms the two swayed back and forth.

They moved here and there.

They tugged and strained.

The big Tory made one effort after another to throw Dick to the ground.

With each failure he became more angry and fierce.

Fierce oaths and threats escaped his lips.

"Jes' wait!" he panted. "I'll git yo' yit! I'll kill yo', yo' blamed no'count reb!"

There was no doubt but that he was angry and desperate enough to put his threat in operation if he got the chance to do so.

Dick realized this.

It made him careful.

He decided to take no chances.

He fought carefully.

Around and around they went.

It was a battle royal.

Skaggs seemed considerably stronger than when they had had the other encounter.

His anger this time made him stronger.

But it would burn his strength out quicker, too.

Dick thought so, anyway, and he fought on the defensive, content to play a waiting game.

Both were so busy that they had no time to look about them.

Presently, in changing his position, Dick stepped into a hole.

The hole was not deep, but it was deep enough so that the youth momentarily lost his balance.

Skaggs took advantage of the occurrence.

He gave Dick a fierce shove.

The youth did his best to recover his balance and keep from going down.

He did not succeed.

He fell to the ground, heavily.

Skaggs came down on top of Dick.

A snarling cry of fiendish joy escaped the lips of the man.

"I've got yo' now!" he cried.

Dick went down with great force.

It happened, unfortunately, that he was close to the cabin, and his head struck one of the logs.

The log was bare—the bark having been removed when the cabin was built—and was as hard as bone.

The result was that Dick was knocked senseless.

When Skaggs realized that the youth was helpless, a cry of fierce joy escaped him.

"Good!" he cried. "I hev got yo' now fur shore!"

It is hard telling what Skaggs would have done had he been left to himself.

He might have made his word good and killed Dick.

But he was not to be left alone to do as he pleased.

There came the clatter of hoofs.

Skaggs leaped up and looked around.

A score of horsemen were approaching at a gallop.

They did not wear the red uniform of the British soldier.

In truth, they wore no uniforms at all.

Skaggs uttered a fierce oath.

He realized that these were the men who had just chased the British soldiers away.

He looked at the approaching horsemen, then at Dick, and hesitated.

The horsemen were approaching rapidly.

Skaggs had no time to spare.

With a fierce imprecation, he gave Dick a kick and leaped away.

He ran toward the timber at the top of his speed.

The horsemen saw his action.

They yelled to him to stop.

Skaggs only ran the faster.

The horsemen fired a few shots at the fleeing man, but did not hit him.

At any rate, he did not stop running.

A few moments later he disappeared into the timber, giving vent to a shout of defiance as he did so.

The men galloped up to the cabin and paused.

They leaped down off their horses.

They approached the prostrate form lying there so still.

A glance at the face of the unconscious youth, and a cry of surprise and consternation escaped the lips of the one who seemed to be the leader of this little party.

"By all that is wonderful, it is Dick Slater!" he exclaimed. "Quick, men, let's see what ails him!"

The man dropped on his knees beside Dick and placed his ear over the youth's heart.

"He's alive!" he cried, joyously, a moment later. "He still breathes!"

He began chafing Dick's wrists, while one of the other men forced a few drops of liquor between the youth's lips.

Presently a shudder ran through Dick's form.

His eyelids quivered.

Then his eyes opened.

"Thank heaven!" murmured the leader of the band of men.

Dick stared up into the faces of the men in a wondering manner for a few moments.

There was a vacant look in his eyes.

Then of a sudden his eyes fell upon the face of the leader.

Dick gave a start.

A look of delight appeared on his face.

"General Marion!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I, Dick," said General Marion—for it was indeed the famous "Swamp Fox." "But what are you doing here, and in this condition?"

Before replying Dick rose to his feet.

"Did he get away?" he asked.

"Who, Dick?" asked the Swamp Fox.

"That scoundrel, Skaggs."

"Was that his name? We saw a fellow run away as we approached."

"That was he. I was struggling with him and stepped in a hole and fell. My head struck one of those logs, and that is the last I remember till just now."

"You were unconscious only a few minutes, I judge, Dick, for the fellow certainly did not have time to do you damage after you fell, before we came upon the scene."

Suddenly Dick thought of the message which he had brought from General Greene.

Had Skaggs succeeded in getting that away from him?

He quickly felt in the inside pocket of his coat.

The paper was still there.

"Good!" he exclaimed aloud. "I was afraid it would be gone."

"Afraid what would be gone, Dick?" asked Marion.

"The message which General Greene gave me to deliver to you. Here it is;" and Dick drew the paper from his pocket and handed it to the Swamp Fox.

Marion seized it.

"It is from General Greene, you say?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes."

Marion tore the paper open.

He read the communication with evident interest. His face lighted up as he did so.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO HORSEMEN.

He looked at Dick.

"I suppose you are to return at once to General Greene?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Very well; tell him I will obey his instructions to the letter."

"I will do so, General Marion."

After some further conversation, Dick went into the timber and made his way to where he had left his horse.

The horse was gone!

"Skaggs did it!" thought Dick. "The scoundrel!"

Dick felt very badly over the loss of Major.

There were not many such horses to be found.

He was no common animal.

It could not be helped now, however.

Dick returned to where Marion and his men were.

"My horse is gone," he said; "that scoundrel, Skaggs, has stolen him."

"Was it that splendid horse of yours, Major?" asked the Swamp Fox.

"Yes, it was Major."

"That is too bad. He was a magnificent animal."

"So he was. I would not have taken a thousand dollars for him. I could always feel safe when on his back."

"I don't doubt it. Well, I can let you have a horse; two of my men will have to ride double for a while."

"I am sorry to inconvenience you so," said Dick.

"That is all right; it is necessary."

At this instant there was a crashing in the underbrush, and a few moments later a horse came trotting out of the timber.

"Major!" cried Dick, joyfully.

And indeed it was Major.

In some manner the horse had gotten rid of Skaggs and had returned to his young master.

Dick leaped forward, and, seizing Major around the neck, nuzzled him caressingly.

"Good old boy," he said; "you got rid of that scoundrel Skaggs, didn't you? Good! I almost hope you threw him and broke his neck!"

"Do you suppose he did throw the fellow, Dick?" asked Marion.

"I haven't the least doubt of it. Doubtless Skaggs struck Major, and that is something he is not used to, and would not stand from any one."

Dick did not have to accept the horse from the Swamp Fox now.

He had his own horse back again.

He mounted Major, and then, after a few more words with Marion, he bade the Swamp Fox and his men good-by and rode away.

He rode back over the road he had traversed the day before, in coming.

He paused at a farmhouse near noon and got his dinner.

Then he pushed on till toward evening when he reached the patriot encampment on the headwaters of the Haw River.

"Ah, Dick, back again, eh?" General Greene greeted, shaking the youth by the hand. "What luck? Did you find Marion?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"And delivered the message, of course?"

"I did."

"Good! What did Marion say?"

"He said for me to tell you that he would obey your instructions to the letter."

"Good!"

General Greene looked down at the ground and seemed to be pondering.

He was silent for several moments.

Then he seemed to make up his mind.

He looked up.

He looked at Dick searchingly.

"How do you feel, Dick?" he asked. "Are you worn out, or are you in shape to undertake some work right away?"

"I got some rest last night," replied Dick; "I am feeling first rate, and am ready to do some more work, if need be, right away."

"Very well; I have some work for you. It will be somewhat dangerous."

"That will not deter me," with a smile.

"I know that, Dick."

"What is the work, sir?"

"I wish you to go to Hillsboro and see if you can learn what Cornwallis intends doing."

"I will go at once, sir."

"I wish you to learn, if possible, how many men he has, and everything of that kind."

"I will do my best to find all this out, sir; and will pick up every scrap of information that I possibly can."

"Do so, Dick."

After some further conversation Dick took his departure, going to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

"What is in the wind, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook. "Are we to have a battle with the British soon, do you think?"

"It would not surprise me, Bob."

"Jove! I hope so. Cornwallis has been bragging so much since his army chased us across North Carolina that I would like to get back at him. I wish we could meet the redcoats and give them a good whipping."

"So do I!" declared Sam Sanderson.

"And I!" from Mark Morrison.

The other youths all said the same.

In fact, the "Liberty Boys" were eager for a battle.

They had fretted a great deal at having to retreat before Cornwallis' army.

Retreating was out of their line.

They preferred, always, to force the other fellows to retreat.

"I should think we would soon be in a position to offer the British battle," said Bob; "we are getting new recruits every day now."

"General Greene will give Cornwallis a battle before a great while, Bob," said Dick, confidently.

Dick ate his supper and rested an hour.

Then he bridled and saddled Major, and, mounting, rode away into the darkness.

He headed almost due east.

He was bound for Hillsboro.

The distance to the town was thirty miles.

Dick was sure he could reach there easily before daylight.

He wished to do this.

He would not dare enter the place in the daytime.

There were too many of the redcoats who knew him by sight.

He wished to get in before daylight, and then he could manage some scheme to learn the news.

He rode steadily onward for hours.

Dick was not familiar with the roads.

He knew the general direction, however.

Which was sufficient for one so skilled as he in following roads at night.

The moon came up at about midnight.

This lighted up things and made it possible to see the road.

It would make it more difficult for the youth to enter Hillsboro secretly, too.

However, Dick thought he could accomplish it.

It was perhaps three o'clock in the morning when, as Dick was riding through a strip of timber, he heard the sound of hoofbeats.

The horse was being ridden at a gallop.

The horseman, whoever he might be, was coming up from behind Dick.

The youth thought of riding into the timber at the side of the road and letting the stranger go past.

He looked back.

It was too late to do so now.

He could see the horseman; consequently the horseman had already seen him.

It would be useless to draw to one side.

Such action on his part would be likely to arouse suspicion on the part of the man, whoever he might be.

Dick decided to ride onward and take the chances.

The man might prove to be a friend.

The youth did not attempt to disguise to himself the fact that the newcomer was much more likely to be an enemy than a friend, however.

Dick was really in the enemy's country.

He figured it that he must be within six or seven miles of Hillsboro.

The youth cautiously felt to see that his pistols were in place and handy, where he could seize them at an instant's notice.

Clatter! clatter! sounded the hoofs of the newcomer's horse.

Dick did not like the idea of being forced to let a stranger ride up behind him.

In case he should desire to do so the man would be able to take Dick at a disadvantage.

Dick rode quietly onward, however, until the horseman was quite close, and then the youth turned his head and looked back over his shoulder.

He kept his head turned till the man rode up alongside. Dick's hand was on the butt of one of the pistols.

"Hello, stranger!" the man greeted. "You are a little rather late, it seems to me—or is it early?"

"Well, I should say early," replied Dick, quietly.

"So it is, I suppose. It all depends on whether you are up before or after midnight."

"You are right."

Dick was trying to size his companion up.

He could not do so very well in the gloom of the forest. They would soon be out of the timber.

Then he would have an opportunity to get a good look at his companion.

"Where are you going, if it is a fair question?" the stranger asked.

"To Hillsboro."

"Ah! that is good. So am I."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

They rode on in silence for a few moments.

Then they emerged from the timber.

The light was sufficient now so that they could see each other quite plainly.

Dick watched his companion out of the corner of his eye.

He was an expert at this.

He could watch a person and yet that person would not be aware of the fact.

Dick seemed to be looking straight ahead.

Dick sized his companion up carefully.

He came to a conclusion presently.

"I believe he is a British spy!" the youth said to himself. "In that case he has probably been up in the vicinity of the patriot encampment, spying."

Dick wondered if the fellow could have learned much that was important.

The youth saw that he was an object of considerable interest to his companion.

The fellow was sizing Dick up closely.

"I wonder what he thinks of me?" thought Dick.

"Thinking of joining the army?" the man asked, presently.

"I was thinking some of doing so," replied Dick, quietly.

He was sure of his man.

He felt perfectly safe in speaking as he did.

He was confident the man was a British spy.

Therefore he would be glad to hear Dick say that he was thinking of joining the British army.

"That is a good idea," the stranger said; "I am thinking of doing so myself."

Dick smiled in his sleeve.

He was sober on the surface, however.

Dick knew the man was already a member of the army.

But it suited Dick to seem to be deceived.

He was not yet ready to declare himself.

"I suppose General Cornwallis has a big army by this time?" said Dick.

"Oh, yes; I guess he has, at least. You see, I don't know, only from hearsay."

"Oh, of course!"

"Well, there will be two more when we get there."

"So there will."

Dick was talking and thinking at the same time.

He was wondering what it was best that he should do.

He did not wish to enter Hillsboro with the man.

He wished to slip in.

If he were to ride boldly into town with the stranger he would have to go at once to the headquarters of the British commander, and he would be recognized.

This was then out of the question.

He must not enter Hillsboro in this fellow's company.

But how to avoid doing so?

That was the question.

There was another thing to be considered, too.

The man was, Dick was confident, a spy.

He had been up in the vicinity of the patriot encampment, spying, Dick was sure.

Doubtless he had become possessed of some information.

Dick felt that he should, if possible, prevent the spy from reaching General Cornwallis with the information.

There was only one way to do this.

This Dick made up his mind to do.

He began watching for an opportunity to take the fellow by surprise.

It came presently.

The man turned his head to look behind him.

Instantly Dick drew a pistol.

He leveled it at the fellow's head.

When the man again turned to look toward Dick, he found himself looking down the muzzle of the pistol.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHASED.

"W-why, w-what d-does this m-mean?" the fellow gasped.

He was taken wholly by surprise.

He was frightened.

This much was evident.

It must be acknowledged, however, that it was enough to startle any one.

"It means that you are my prisoner!" said Dick, quietly.

"Y-your p-prisoner?"

"Yes!"

Dick spoke sternly.

"B-but why am I your prisoner? W-why s-should you wish to m-make me a p-prisoner?"

"That is my business. Stop your horse!"

The man obeyed.

Dick brought Major to a stop, also.

"Now up with your hands!"

The fellow extended his hands above his head.

Dick reached over and felt for weapons.

He found a couple of pistols.

These he transferred from the prisoner's pockets to his own.

"They seem to be very good weapons," Dick remarked, coolly; "so I will confiscate them. They will do nicely to shoot redcoats with."

The man uttered a growl.

He evidently did not appreciate Dick's humor.

"I don't see what you mean by doing this," the fellow said; "you said a little while ago that you were going to Hillsboro to join the army, didn't you?"

"I believe I did say something of that kind."

"Well, I am already a member of the British army, so you are making a mistake in doing this thing."

"Oh, no; I'm not making any mistake."

"Perhaps you don't believe me when I say I am a member of the British army?"

"On the contrary, I do believe you."

"You do?"

"I do."

"Then why have you done this?"

"Why?"

"Yes."

Dick laughed.

"It is very simple," he said.

"I don't see it."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Well, it is, just the same; and if you would think a moment, I judge you would understand."

The fellow looked at Dick a few moments and then exclaimed:

"By Jove, I believe you are a rebel!"

"Not a rebel—a patriot."

Dick spoke with quiet dignity.

"It's all the same."

"Not from my viewpoint; doubtless from yours it is."

"You are rebels, nothing else."

"I won't argue the question. Dismount!"

Dick spoke sharply.

The man obeyed without a word.

Somehow, this young man awed him.

The fellow was in reality a British spy.

He was accounted one of the best and bravest among the British spies.

Yet he had surrendered to Dick without attempting resistance.

He could hardly understand it himself.

The instant the fellow was on the ground Dick leaped down also.

"Place your hands together behind your back!" ordered Dick.

The redcoat obeyed.

Dick quickly removed the hitching-strap from off the bridle and tied the man's wrists together with it.

"There!" the youth remarked, when he had finished. "I guess that will hold you, all right."

The man made no reply.

Dick pondered a few moments.

He had the man prisoner.

But now what should be done with him?

This was a question.

Dick wished to keep the fellow, now that he had captured him.

He wished to take the redcoat back to the patriot encampment when he was ready to return.

But he was not ready to return as yet.

He would not be before some time during the following night.

Where could he leave the prisoner until then?

This was a question which it was hard to answer.

Dick happened to glance over into a field at one side of the road.

He saw, perhaps a quarter of a mile distant, a small house.

It had a deserted look.

The thought struck the youth that this house, or shanty, more properly speaking, might be unoccupied.

In that case it would do first rate as a place to leave the prisoner.

Dick decided to investigate.

He first led the horses to the fence and tied them.

He kept his eyes on the prisoner while doing so.

The fellow's arms were bound, but his legs were unfettered.

He might take it into his head to make a run for it.

He must have seen that Dick was watching him, however.

At any rate, he made no attempt to escape.

Dick returned to where the fellow was standing.

"Come with me," said Dick.

He took the fellow by one arm.

They walked to the fence and climbed over.

The redcoat seemed to realize that he would gain nothing by refusing to do as the youth told him.

They walked across the field.

It did not take them long to reach the shanty.

Dick cautioned his companion.

"Be quiet," he said; "if you cry out or make any disturbance it will be the worse for you!"

Dick feared that the shanty might be occupied.

They made their way up to the door.

They paused.

Dick placed his ear close against the door.

He listened intently.

He could not hear a sound within.

Of course, if the house was occupied the inmates would likely be asleep; but somehow Dick did not believe the house was occupied.

It had that indescribable deserted air so common to unoccupied houses.

Dick knocked on the door.

He listened, but was not surprised when there came no response to the knock.

He lifted the latch and pushed against the door.

It gave in response to his push, and opened slowly and with protesting creaks.

Dick bent forward and looked into the room.

At the farther side was a window.

It was open, and the moon was shining in.

The shanty was empty.

Dick took the prisoner by the arm and led him into the room.

At one side was a bunk.

Dick pointed to this.

"Into it!" he ordered.

The prisoner looked at the bunk, then around the dreary interior of the deserted shanty, and then at Dick.

"Surely you won't force me to stay in this place?" he asked, in a tone of protest.

"It is necessary."

The redcoat looked as if about to risk making a bolt for liberty.

If such a thought was in his mind, he dismissed it, however.

He knew he could not escape.

So with a half-stifled groan he threw himself down in the bunk as ordered to do.

Dick now cut off a portion of the halter-strap, which had been used in binding the redcoat's wrists, and tied his ankles with it.

"Great guns! you are not going to leave me here to starve, are you?" cried the prisoner.

There was fear, horror in his tone.

"Oh, no; I'll be back here long before you have time to starve," said Dick, cheerfully.

"If you don't forget it!" in a bitter voice.

"Oh, I won't forget it."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I am going to take you back to the patriot army with me when I go."

"And when will that be?"

"To-morrow night, I think."

"And must I remain here until then without anything to eat or drink?"

"I judge so."

"Why, man, that is inhuman!"

"Oh, I don't think so. It will be a bit unpleasant, but you will be able to stand it, all right. I have gone without food or drink for a longer period than that, and still live."

"Don't leave me here!" the man pleaded.

"I am sorry, but I must."

"You will be sorry for it if you do!"

The man's voice had changed from pleading to threatening.

Dick laughed.

"I will risk it," he said, quietly. "Good night!"

With the words, Dick left the shanty, pulling the door shut behind him.

As he walked away he heard the prisoner giving vent to oaths and threats.

"He needs taking down a bit," thought Dick; "a day or so in there without food or drink will do him good, I think."

Dick was soon back to where he had left the horses.

"What shall I do with his horse?" the youth asked himself.

He decided to take the horse over to the shanty and tie him around behind the building where he would not be seen by any one passing along the road.

This took some little time.

It was necessary to make an opening through the fence.

As it was a rail fence, this was not difficult, however.

Dick soon threw down the ends of a sufficient number of rails so that the horse could get through, and then he led the animal over to the shanty and around behind it.

The youth tied the horse to a post and started back.

Suddenly he heard the prisoner in the shanty give vent to a loud yell for "Help!"

Dick went to the door and pushed it open.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Why are you yelling? It will do you no good."

"Oh, is it you?" the prisoner exclaimed, in disgust. "I thought some one else had come."

"I brought your horse over and tied him back of the shanty," explained Dick; "if you should happen to succeed in getting free before I return you will find him there."

"Go; curse you! Begone!" cried the man.

He was greatly disappointed, doubtless.

Dick closed the door and walked back to the road.

He mounted Major and set off in the direction of Hillsboro.

He had ridden but a short distance when he saw a body of horsemen coming toward him.

"Redcoats, I'll wager!" thought Dick. "I must not let them catch me."

As good luck would have it, Dick at this moment came to a crossroad.

He was seen, however.

The sound of yells from the party of horsemen came to Dick's ears.

"Let them come, if they like," thought Dick, grimly; "they will have hard work catching Major."

The redcoats, for such they evidently were, gave chase.

They turned down the crossroad and came after Dick at full speed.

Dick spoke a word to Major, and the noble animal leaped forward and sped up the road at a pace which made it seem like folly for the redcoats to attempt to catch up.

They seemed to realize this, presently, for they paused and turned back.

As soon as Dick saw they had given up the chase, he spoke a word to Major, and the horse slackened down to an ordinary gallop.

At the first opportunity Dick turned and headed again in the direction of Hillsboro.

"If I don't look out it will be daylight before I get there," thought Dick. "However, it doesn't make much difference; it is such a moonlight night, anyway. I wish it was cloudy, like it was last night."

CHAPTER IX.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Dick had been in Hillsboro before.

He knew a place half a mile out from town where a patriot lived.

He rode there.

He reached there a little while before sunrise.

The man was up, however, and was out in the barnyard milking.

He was glad to see Dick, who had stopped at his house once before.

He put Major in the stable, and then made Dick go to the house and eat breakfast.

Then Dick hastened away.

He wished to enter town before daylight, if possible.

He was aware that the entrances would be guarded, so he cut across lots.

In this way he avoided the sentinels.

Once down in the town, and he was all right.

All he had to fear then was that some one would see him and recognize him.

He kept a wary eye around him as he moved along.

He had no wish to be recognized.

It would mean that he would have to cut and run for it.

He would not have cared for that so much.

What he would have regretted was that he would have been unable to learn anything regarding the intention of the British.

Dick reached a tavern in safety, however.

He knew that the redcoats usually thronged the bar-rooms of the taverns.

He might be able to pick up some information.

When he entered the bar-room, he found a number of redcoats there, early as it was.

They looked sleepy, however, and were there for an early morning drink.

They did not indulge in much talk.

Dick did not remain here long.

He went out upon the street once more.

He moved slowly along.

He had his hat pulled well down over his eyes.

His face was thus hidden to such an extent that he believed that he would not be recognized, even though seen by some one who knew him.

The people began to appear on the streets presently.

Dick was glad of this.

The more there were on the streets, the less likely was he to attract attention.

The streets grew crowded after a while.

The town was overrun with redcoats, and when they got to stirring, the streets were thronged.

This suited Dick.

He moved here and there, pausing occasionally and listening to the conversation of a group of redcoats.

He picked up many little scraps of information. Everything he heard seemed to indicate that Cornwallis was going to wait in Hillsboro until he had increased the size of his army materially by means of Tory recruits.

There was no talk of an immediate advance to attack General Greene's army.

Dick put in the day in this fashion.

He had secured enough information by evening to make him certain that no immediate advance from Hillsboro could be made by the British.

"I might as well return to General Greene with the news," thought Dick. "There is no use for me to remain here longer."

Among others, Dick had been so fortunate as to overhear conversation between some of the staff officers.

This was in the bar-room of one of the leading taverns. So he was well satisfied that Cornwallis had no intention of coming out to meet Greene at present.

Dick decided to wait until after dark before leaving town. It would be much easier and safer getting away.

He entered a tavern and went into the dining-room and ate supper.

When he had paid his score, he seated himself in the bar-room and settled down to wait for darkness.

There were a number of redcoats in the room.

They were drinking and talking.

Presently the door opened and a party of four redcoats entered.

Dick glanced up, carelessly.

As he did so he felt a sudden chill at the heart.

He recognized one of the four men.

The man in question was the spy whom Dick had captured the night before, and whom he had left bound hand and foot in the old shanty, six or seven miles out from Hillsboro!

"It is he; I am sure of it!" thought Dick. "Jove! I wonder how he managed to escape?"

Doubtless he had been rescued by some of his friends. It did not matter, however, how he had escaped.

It was sufficient to know that he had done so.

He was here in the room with Dick.

That was enough to think of without conjecturing as to how he had got free.

Dick wondered if the fellow would recognize him.

The youth pulled his hat down still more over his eyes.

He was sitting over in one corner and he shrank back farther, until he was against the wall.

He managed to get the forms of some redcoats, who sat

at a table a few feet distant, between himself and the spy and his companions.

They were now ranged up in front of the bar getting ready to take a drink.

There was no immediate danger of the spy seeing Dick.

Dick hoped the four would leave the bar-room as soon as they got their drinks.

He was destined to be disappointed, however.

When the men had disposed of the liquor they turned and looked around them.

Dick, who was peering out from under the edge of his hat, saw the fellows leave the bar and walk toward the party sitting at the table close to where Dick was.

"Great guns!" thought Dick; "they're coming over to have a talk with some of their comrades. I fear I am in for it! That fellow will see me, undoubtedly, and the chances are that he will recognize me."

Dick crouched down in his chair and pretended to be asleep.

He managed to pull his hat still farther down over his eyes.

The hat concealed practically all of his face now.

Dick hoped the spy would not remember how he had been dressed.

In that case he might not take notice of Dick.

There was a small hole in the top of the youth's hat.

Dick could see through this hole.

He kept his eye on the spy.

This was the fellow from whom danger was to be apprehended.

The four reached the table and greeted their comrades.

"Hello, Martin!" greeted one of the redcoats, who was seated at the table. "So you got back safe and sound, did you? The rebels didn't capture you?"

The fellow addressed as "Martin" was the spy.

Dick saw a dark look appear on his face.

"I didn't come anywhere near being captured while I was up near where the rebel army is, spying," was the reply; "but while on my way here, and only some six or seven miles out from town, I was made prisoner by a fellow I overtook on the road."

"What is that! You let one man make you a prisoner?"

Evidently this surprised the redcoats.

"I would not have believed it, Martin," said another.

"I thought you a match for any three or four rebels—for I suppose the fellow must have been a rebel."

"Undoubtedly he was a rebel—and a spy, too! I don't doubt that he is in town at this very moment."

The spy little thought that the subject of their discussion

was sitting within eight feet of him, listening to every word he uttered.

If Dick's situation had not been so dangerous he would have been amused.

As it was, the spy might at any moment discover that the fellow in the corner, who was seemingly drunk and asleep, was the fellow who had made a prisoner of him the night before.

Then Dick would be in great danger.

He doubted if he would be able to escape.

The youth made up his mind to try, however, if he was discovered.

By acting with great promptitude he might be able to get out and away.

He hoped, though, that the spy would not take any notice of him.

In this he was destined to be disappointed.

While talking and explaining how it happened that he had been made a prisoner by one man, the spy's eyes roved here and there about the room, and presently they rested for an instant on Dick.

The fellow gave a start.

Dick was watching him closely.

He saw the look and the start.

He felt sure that he was in for it.

If the fellow had not recognized him of a certainty, he had been so struck with Dick's appearance that he would investigate.

Then he would discover that Dick was the person who had captured him on the road the night before.

Dick gathered himself together and nerved himself for a supreme effort.

He felt that there was lively work ahead.

He believed it was close at hand.

He was right.

The spy suddenly strode forward.

He came straight toward Dick.

The youth knew what the fellow intended doing.

He was going to lift Dick's hat off so as to get a look at the youth's face.

Dick decided that his best plan was to take the initiative.

Instead of being taken by surprise, as the spy evidently thought Dick would be, the youth decided to surprise the spy.

Of course, the fellow did not know that Dick was watching him through a hole in the hat, so he was not on his guard as much as he otherwise might have been.

The result was that Dick was enabled to put his plan into effect.

When the spy was within three feet of Dick the youth suddenly lifted his left foot and kicked the fellow in the stomach.

It was a straightout kick, which doubled the spy up and sent him to the floor with a crash and a yell which startled the inmates of the bar-room.

Dick followed up his advantage.

He made use of the opportunity which was before him of escaping before the redcoats could grasp the situation.

The spy was in no condition to explain; nor would he be for a few moments.

Dick had rendered him speechless, while all he could do was to groan and gasp for breath.

Dick was on his feet by the time the spy struck the floor. He leaped over the fallen man and made a dash for the door.

This aroused the inmates from their stupor of surprise. A number leaped to their feet and tried to head Dick off. They did not know what it was all about, of course, but they had seen this stranger kick one of their number down, and they felt that this was sufficient reason why they should try to keep the stranger from leaving the room.

They got themselves into trouble very promptly.

Dick was determined not to be stopped.

Out shot his fists, first one, then the other.

Down went two redcoats.

Again the fists shot out.

Down went two more redcoats.

Every inmate of the bar-room was now on his feet.

A wild scramble was made in an attempt to keep Dick from getting out of the room.

Dick was too quick for them, however.

He knocked down a couple of more redcoats and then, reaching the door, jerked it open, and leaped through the doorway.

Dick's sudden appearance on the street attracted the attention of passersby, but none started to pursue him until after the redcoats came swarming and yelling out of the bar-room.

By this time, however, Dick had got a good start.

He felt that he would have to run as he had never run before, though.

He did run, too.

And after him came the redcoats.

New accessions were constantly made to the ranks of the youth's pursuers, but none of them were as swift runners as was Dick.

He drew gradually away.

His only fear was that he might be headed off from in front.

Nothing of the kind occurred, however.

Dick succeeded in getting out of the town well in advance, and as soon as the lights were left behind, and was swallowed up in the darkness, he felt safe.

The redcoats evidently realized that they could not hope to catch Dick, for the yelling ceased.

"I guess they have given up the chase," thought Dick; "well, I am glad of it."

Five minutes later he was at the house of the patriot.

Ten minutes after that he was mounted on the back of a horse and was riding rapidly away in the direction of the patriot encampment.

CHAPTER X.

MAKING IT WARM FOR THE REDCOATS.

General Greene was well pleased when, next morning, Dick put in an appearance and reported that Cornwallis had no immediate intention of seeking a battle.

"That suits me all the better," he said; "it will give me more time in which to get ready. Then, when my army is increased to such a number as to make me on anything but unequal terms with him, I will go out and dare Cornwallis to give us battle."

"And until then," said Dick, "I wish you would give me and my brave 'Liberty Boys' a roving commission. They are pining for action, and there are numerous roaming bands of redcoats which we could give chase to."

"You have my permission, Dick," said General Greene; "go out and chase the redcoats all you want to. Don't let the boys be too rash and venturesome, however, as I shall need your services badly when I get ready to offer Cornwallis battle."

"Thank you!" cried Dick. "I will see to it that they do not do anything too rash, sir."

Dick hastened to the youths with the news.

The "Liberty Boys" were delighted.

They wished to be away at once, but Dick had had no sleep for two nights, and he told them to be getting ready as he stole two or three hours' sleep.

Dick lay down and was almost instantly asleep.

Bob woke him at half-past ten o'clock.

At half-past eleven they had eaten their dinners and were ready to start out.

They rode away, heading in the direction of Hillsboro.

"I wish I had a horse and was a member of that gang," said a soldier, regretfully, as he gazed after the youths; "just as like as not they will ride down to Hillsboro and charge through the town."

"It would be just about like them," said another.

"That's right," from still another; "they are regular dare-devils, those fellows. They aren't afraid of anything."

"They will make it warm for any bands of redcoats that they happen to meet up with."

"They will that!"

The "Liberty Boys" rode onward at a gallop.

They were eager to encounter some redcoats.

They had been forced to retreat, along with the entire patriot army, clear across the State of North Carolina, and had had little chance to fight for so long that they were anxious now to get to doing something.

They were on their mettle, and it would certainly go hard with the redcoats when the youths got a chance at them—that is, of course, providing the redcoats did not outnumber them too greatly.

About the middle of the afternoon the youths paused on the top of a high hill and gazed all around, in the hope that they might sight some British soldiers.

Suddenly Bob uttered an exclamation.

"Look yonder!" he cried. "Yonder are some redcoats! See them? They are over in the field beyond the brush, and they are trying to catch some horses."

All looked in the direction in which Bob pointed, and saw that he had spoken truly.

The redcoats were perhaps half a mile distant.

They were chasing some horses.

It was evidently a foraging party.

They were out for anything they could get, and would, no doubt, take the horses if they could catch them.

"Come on, boys," said Dick.

He rode down the hillside and followed the road down till he reached a point opposite the field in which were the redcoats.

The "Liberty Boys" had kept close behind their leader.

There was a strip of thick brush perhaps a quarter of a mile in width between the youths and their intended victims.

The "Liberty Boys" tried to lead their horses through the brush, but could not do it.

The brush was so thick the horses could not get through.

This did not daunt the youths in the least.

They tied their horses and pushed forward on foot.

It was hard work getting through, even then.

They finally succeeded, however, and presently came out of the brush.

They were confronted by a high stone wall.

This did not daunt them, either.

The hated redcoats were just beyond the wall.

The youths were determined to get at their enemies.

They were on their mettle now, and at a word from Dick—the word being passed from one to another quickly—fifty of the youths took their places beside the wall, and, bending over, placed their hands on the ground.

They stood in this position, their arms and legs rigid, and the other fifty youths quickly mounted on their comrades' backs.

They were now enabled to see over the wall.

The top was about level with their chests.

The redcoats, as it happened, were right close to the wall.

They had given up the idea of catching the horses, and had just picked up their muskets to leave when the heads of the "Liberty Boys" suddenly appeared above the top of the wall.

To say that the redcoats were surprised is stating the matter mildly.

They were almost paralyzed with amazement.

They stood, staring, open-mouthed.

Doubtless they had had no idea there was an enemy within ten miles of them.

And to see fifty undoubted enemies pop up so suddenly and unexpectedly was enough to startle them.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

The "Liberty Boys" obeyed.

Crash!—roar!

The sound of the volley awoke the echoes for miles around.

A number of the redcoats fell, dead and wounded.

Dick leaped up on top of the wall.

He turned and beckoned to his comrades.

"Follow me, my brave 'Liberty Boys!'" cried Dick, leaping, sword in hand, down off the stone wall. "Give it to the redcoated rascals!"

The redcoats took to their heels.

They seemed to come to a realization of the situation all of a sudden.

The youths leaped up on top of the wall and down on the other side in a jiffy.

They were on their mettle, and they gave chase to the redcoats with vim and energy.

The redcoats fled for their lives.

Fear seemed to lend wings to their feet, and they ran

across the field, jumped a fence, and, mounting their horses, rode away at a gallop.

Dick and his comrades seeing it was useless to chase the fugitives further afoot, hastened back, climbed over the wall, made their way through the brush to where they had left their horses, mounted and rode down the road at a gallop.

Dick had hoped to be able to head the redcoats off, but the fellows had made too good use of the time at their disposal and had disappeared.

The "Liberty Boys" paused at a farmhouse, and Dick told the farmer to go up and bury the dead redcoats.

"Great Joopeter! did yo' kill some uv 'em?" the farmer asked.

"Yes," replied Dick, "and wounded some; you had better take care of the wounded also."

"Sarved 'em right fur tryin' ter steal my hosses!" the farmer said, grimly.

Then Dick and his companions rode onward.

During the next two weeks the "Liberty Boys" kept this work up.

They became a haunting terror to the British.

Foraging bands got so they dared not venture more than three or four miles from Hillsboro.

The youths were very bold, and on one or two occasions they actually chased foraging bands of British to the very edge of the town.

They returned to headquarters every four or five days and reported to General Greene; and one day, Greene told Dick he was at last ready to offer Cornwallis a battle.

"We will break camp to-morrow," he said, "and will move down and take up our position at Guilford. I think that is about the most favorable place for a battle that we could find."

"It is a very good place, I think," coincided Dick.

Next day the patriot army broke camp.

It marched down and took up its position at Guilford.

Scouts and spies from Hillsboro carried the news to General Cornwallis.

He was amazed to learn that the patriot army had advanced to Guilford.

It looked as if Greene was willing to give battle.

Cornwallis was delighted by the thought.

He knew the patriot army had been increased considerably through the addition of new recruits.

But his army had been increased some also.

He thought the increase of one would about offset the increase of the other.

He decided to advance on Guilford and crush the patri-

He had chased Greene clear across North Carolina in attempt to get a chance to crush him, but had been fled; he would now do what he had tried to do then.

He gave orders to break camp at once.

As soon as they could get ready the soldiers marched out Hillsboro.

The army headed for Guilford.

On the morning of March 15 the British and the patriot nies faced each other at Guilford.

General Greene's army consisted of fifteen hundred Continental soldiers and eighteen hundred militia.

Cornwallis had only about twenty-two hundred men, but y were all veterans.

General Greene hardly expected to win the battle which knew was about to be fought.

He realized that the militia, never having been under , would not be of much service to him.

However, it was not necessary that he should win the le in a conclusive fashion.

f he should be able to cripple Cornwallis' army and ken it materially, that would be all that would be ssary.

nd he believed he could do this.

eneral Greene arranged his army in three lines.

e placed the North Carolina militia in the front line. hey were behind a log fence, which sheltered them ndidly.

front of them was an open cornfield.

he British would have to advance right across the open

he militia were good shots and Greene thought they d be able to make some gaps in the British lines e the fence was reached.

ck of the North Carolina militia a distance of three red yards, just within the edge of the timber, were Virginia militia.

ur hundred yards still farther back were the Maryland Virginia regulars.

e flanks were guarded by riflemen, and by cavalry e Colonel Washington and Colonel Lee.

ck and his "Liberty Boys" were among these.

last the British attacked.

ey charged across the field with fierce energy.

The North Carolina militia fired a couple of volleys, but fired too soon and did but little damage.

They were unable to withstand the fierce charge of the redcoats, and fell back in confusion.

On came the British.

They were evidently encouraged by their success so far.

But when they struck the line of the Virginia militia they encountered an obstacle.

The militia stood their ground like veterans.

They fought with such stubbornness as to disconcert the redcoats greatly.

There was a desperate struggle before it gave way.

And even then it fell back very slowly, contesting every foot of the distance.

When the British finally reached the third line of the patriots, the battle waged fiercely.

This line was made up of veterans like the redcoats.

It was diamond cut diamond.

The patriots on the right wing were too much for the redcoats, and forced them back at the point of the bayonet.

On the left wing, however, the British were too strong for the patriots.

They forced the patriots back and captured two cannon.

At this juncture Colonel Washington gave the order to the cavalry to charge.

The "Liberty Boys" were in the front ranks.

At their head rode Dick.

He rode by the side of Colonel Washington.

Forward rushed the cavalry like a resistless avalanche.

They were upon the British in a few moments.

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to ringing shouts.

They fought like demons.

They were on their mettle, now, and nothing could stand before them.

The redcoats did the best they could to do so, but could not.

They broke and fled, relinquishing the cannon which they had just captured.

Again the patriots were in possession of the cannon, and the gunners returned to their work.

This grand work by the "Liberty Boys" and other cavalymen almost won the day for the patriots.

Victory seemed certain for the patriots.

Cornwallis was thrown entirely on the defensive.

He was desperate, however.

The winning or losing of this battle meant everything to him.

He had to win it or be discredited with the British people for all time.

He had been trying to get a battle with the patriots for months, had burned his baggage and traveled hundreds of miles; and now if he were to be defeated, after all, it would be a deathblow to the British hopes.

So for two hours Cornwallis worked like a beaver, and finally succeeded in restoring order in his ranks.

He concentrated his men on a hill near the courthouse.

Here all attempts to break their lines proved unavailing, and at last, as evening drew near, General Greene withdrew his troops from the field.

The British remained in possession of the field, and were the accredited winners of the battle; but as they lost as many men as did the patriots, it might properly be termed a drawn battle.

One thing is sure, the result of the battle was not so bad for Greene as for Cornwallis.

The British army was so badly crippled—it lost at least six hundred men—that it could do nothing farther.

Cornwallis did not dare offer another battle.

On the third day after the battle he abandoned his wounded and marched away toward Wilmington.

This was a practical admission that he gave up for the present, at least, and was equivalent to acknowledging that the battle of Guilford had partaken more of the nature of a defeat than a victory.

THE END.

The next number (24) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' DOUBLE VICTORY; OR, DOWNING THE REDCOATS AND TORIES," by Harry Moore.

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